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AUTHOR Cross, Dolores E.
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ABSTRACT

This speech describes Chicago State University's (CSU) model for encouraging student retention and success and the organizational changes that were necessary to implement the model during a period of fiscal constraints. A description of the institution and its context notes that CSU is a comprehensive, urban, commuter university serving a predominantly minority student population who are often the first in their family to attend college, are older than the traditional college student, and are balancing work and family responsibilities with school attendance. Initiating the new retention program required development of preliminary 7-year goals for retention and graduation, revising the budget process, and building connections with local public schools. The second stage involved creating an educational environment that met the needs of the student body by creating a sense of community through a faculty phoneathon to recruit students and respond to their questions, decentralizing student advising, and contacting the year's prior freshman class over the summer to increase the second year retention rate. Other initiatives have included implementing 15 minute one stop registration and financial aid application routines, welcome activities, faculty incentives and development, academic support services, community outreach efforts, resource reallocation, and expanded evening and weekend course offerings. (JB)

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THE ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT AFFECT STUDENT RETENTION IN AN URBAN COMMUTER UNIVERSITY

Presented by:

Dr. Dolores E. Cross
President
Chicago State University

at the

NCA ANNUAL MEETING
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
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Good morning. I'm pleased to be here this morning and to have this opportunity to share with you the Chicago State University experience. What I'd like to do is tell you about our model for student retention and success and the organizational changes that were necessary to implement the model during a period of fiscal constraints.

By way of background, let me first tell you a bit about Chicago State University. We are a comprehensive urban, commuter university, serving a predominantly minority student population. In fact, Chicago State enrolls one-third of all African-American students attending public universities in Illinois. Many of our students are non-traditional, coming to Chicago State with prior work experience, seeking to change or advance their careers.

To give you an idea of who the typical CSU student is, let me describe briefly some general characteristics of our student population. They include:

- Being the first in their family to attend college;
- Living in a densely populated urban area;
- Being older than the traditional 18 to 24 year old;
- Having patterns of attendance that, of necessity, include a mix of full and part-time attendance;
- Being economically and sometimes academically disadvantaged;
- Having to commute to college while also balancing the responsibility of a job and family.

At Chicago State University, student retention and graduation rates traditionally have been low. Students who did graduate often took longer to complete their studies. Given the competing pressures in their lives, that was hardly a surprise.

Upon assuming the Presidency, I set some ambitious goals for Chicago State: a 75 percent graduation rate in seven years and improved freshmen retention rates to sustain the completion goal. At the same time, I made the campus community aware that we would have to change things if we were to attempt those goals. I instituted a participative approach to the planning and budgeting processes, in which divisions and departments use a "bottom up" approach for developing budget requests. These are then submitted to the University Budget Committee for recommendations to the President. That committee works with the Strategic Planning and Faculty Development Committees in reviewing requests and proposals, to be certain that they do not conflict with the values of the University or our model of student success.

That model is based on three principles:

1. Preparing and recruiting students for enrollment at the University;

2. Retaining and graduating students through academic program improvement and safety nets; and

3. Providing students with windows of opportunity for career and professional advancement.

At Chicago State, our pre-college initiatives are aimed at building the University pipeline. We participate in a number of activities with the Chicago public schools, including Saturday academies, summer institutes, Advanced Placement programs, teacher in-service and staff development programs and cooperative efforts with community organizations and public and private agencies.

Opportunities for students after they leave college are created through internships, cooperative education programs, pipeline programs with graduate institutions and minority enhancement programs in fields in which minorities continue to be under-represented.

The second stage in our model, retention and student support, are areas on which I'd like to focus for the remainder of this discussion. When I first assumed my responsibilities as President of Chicago State University in the summer of 1990, Chicago State was experiencing declining enrollments and high student attrition. It was clear that students were not getting what they needed, or wanted, from the systems that were in place. I saw students who were experiencing so many pressures, yet who were determined to pursue a college education. They were women and men who were willing to make sacrifices because they recognized the value of education, in their lives and in those of their families. In those students' experiences, I saw my own, years ago, as I struggled to balance my education with a family and a job. At the same time, those students were frustrated by a system that offered little in the way of understanding their needs and little in the way of effective support for academic or personal problems.

Faced with the gloomy statistics and, at the same time, with the recognition of great potential and determination among our students, the task was clear. We needed to find ways to help develop that potential and to create safety nets that would alleviate the pressures, and to be sufficiently innovative to do all of this with limited resources. We needed to look at existing services and ask whether they were doing what they were intended to do. In addition, were there other new services or organizational structures that could be put in place?

The key was to create a sense of family, a nurturing environment where students would feel welcome, where they would be able to learn and where they would continue coming back until they graduated. This is a real challenge at any commuter university, where students generally spend so little of their time on campus. How does a campus create that sense of community, that feeling of unity among students, faculty and administrators, given the limited time that many students are on campus? I realized that what was needed was an unconventional approach, using new and different ways of drawing students, faculty and staff, and even members of the community into a cohesive university family.

We began immediately, during the summer, with a faculty phonathon. Faculty and Office of Admissions staff worked together for several weeks on a telephone recruitment campaign. More than 2500 students were contacted and their questions and concerns responded to by faculty members. That campaign resulted in an 18 percent enrollment increase in the fall of 1990, the largest among all public universities in the State.

That was the first sign that the ultimate message had gotten through. The message that Chicago State cares!

Next, we scrutinized our student advisement process, which had been centralized in one office. Recognizing the importance of faculty - student interaction in retention, we moved to decentralize advising to the academic departments, where students could confer with and plan under the guidance of faculty members from their departments, who also would be instructing them. This process facilitates a closer relationship as well as more timely monitoring of a student's progress.

After the success of our summer phonathon, we had clear evidence that the one-on-one approach worked for CSU's students. We used the same strategy in our 1991 summer bridge program. All of the prior year's freshmen were called over the summer to see whether they were experiencing any problems which might preclude their returning for a second year at Chicago State University. Faculty and staff again worked with students to help resolve problems.

Short term indicators are that the effort was successful. Our freshman second-year retention rate has improved drastically, from 55 percent in fall 1989 to over 63 percent in fall 1991. Enrollments continue to increase to the point where we have nearly 8500 students attending, an increase of 40 percent since fall 1989, and the highest ever at Chicago State University.

As I reflect, I am aware that there is a sense of accomplishment in the numbers. Our recruitment activities have been successful. However, enrolling more students is just the beginning. If they are to benefit from the educational opportunities, they need to persist and complete their programs. We continually need to look at the students and ask ourselves, how are they doing? How are they feeling? I have at times used the term "student obsessed". If that is so, it is a magnificent obsession. For they are, after all, our reason for being.

With that in mind, and with the support of faculty and administration, I set bold new goals for success for our students, goals that recognize the realities of their lives and at the same time reaffirm their determination to succeed. I conceded that, given the demands on our students, it was unrealistic to expect most of them to graduate in four or even five years. Thus, I established as a goal, the 75 percent graduation rate in seven years. Admittedly, that is an ambitious goal but one that I believe is attainable through constant innovation, evaluation and improvement in student support systems.

Enrollments were growing. The next step was to give our students what they needed to stay in college. Once those determined women and men set foot on campus, they encountered our new "one-stop" registration process. Students used the word "unbelievable" in talking about the 15 minutes that it took for them to sign up for classes, arrange for financial aid, and pay their fees. The same process formerly had taken days.

Building on that success, we then merged the offices of admissions and financial aid into a new Admissions and Financial Aid Center. That consolidation made permanent the "one stop" process for incoming students. It also facilitated the University's being able to address the two most important questions for freshmen: Will I be admitted to the University; and how will I pay for it?

This semester, we initiated a new advance registration, with deferred payment option. Nearly half of our students took advantage of the new process, creating a smoother and less anxiety-ridden process for students and administrators.

Following registration, students then plunged into "Welcome Week" activities, in which they met with Deans, Department Chairs, faculty and other students. Students expressed appreciation for the personal touch.

In all of the changes that I have implemented, throughout the initiatives that have been created, I have emphasized the actualization of the "we" tradition. That is the idea that no one person above can bring about success. Faculty and staff, families and the community, all play an important role in the enhanced retention efforts at Chicago State.

Recognizing that faculty participation, both in and outside of the classroom, is a key element in student success, we designed many of our new retention initiatives around faculty involvement.

One such initiative was the creation of the Incentive Grant Award Program, with provides faculty and staff members with additional resources to develop and implement new processes to help students learn and succeed. Thus far, over 50 grants have been awarded to fund projects involving academic tutorials, peer tutoring, student and faculty joint research activities and other retention - oriented projects.

Faculty involvement also is key to improving opportunities for students through our minority enhancement program, which is intended to encourage and prepare minority students to pursue graduate work. Under this program, students and faculty work together on advanced research and studies throughout the University.

We've also improved opportunities for our students by working with other educational institutions. The University of Minnesota has worked out a pipeline program for us, so that we can prepare our students better for graduate study after they earn their bachelor's degree.

A major aspect of our initiatives to enhance retention through the provision of academic support is the Office of Academic Support. We created that office to coordinate and monitor all academic support services. One of that office's first efforts was the implementation of an early warning/early identification system, in which student progress is monitored at six, nine and twelve week intervals. Immediate assistance is then offered to those who need it. Students experiencing problems in note-taking, anxiety about tests and other difficulties, are referred to the Office's counseling center and appropriate intervention, such as tutoring, mentoring and counseling are provided. These kinds of assistance have had a marked impact on student retention. The freshman mid-semester withdrawal rate dropped from 25 percent to just 3 percent. As a result of the help provided by this office, students continue to improve in their class performance.

Up to this point, I've given you a pretty good idea of how different segments of the campus community have become involved in student retention. Clearly, retention is not just a student issue but a University concern. In fact, the CSU family concept does not draw the line at campus borders. Many of our students come from the surrounding communities, and subsequently bring knowledge and skills gained at CSU back to those communities. I, therefore, felt that it was important to include the community in our retention efforts. What I did was to create a Council of Community Volunteers, composed of retired teachers, business leaders, and other professionals to serve as tutors, mentors, speakers and counselors. This has provided another area of support and caring for our students.

In devising retention strategies that work, I have found it necessary to be constantly innovative and flexible, and to recognize students as individuals with diverse needs. Addressing both academic and non-academic needs has required considerable innovation. Some of the things we've tried and tested include:

- Expanding course offerings in the evenings and or weekends.
- Expanding child care services to include evening hours.
- Establishing satellite food and bookstore services.
- Keeping the library open until 2:00 a.m. during final exams, in order to provide a conducive study environment.
- Expanding internship opportunities for students.

Last fall, I initiated a reorganization of the Division of Student Affairs and distributed its functions to the Division of Academic Affairs. The purpose was to establish a much stronger relationship between student development and academic affairs areas in order to strengthen the academic and personal growth of students. This brings students closer to faculty and to what their university experience is all about - learning. This new organizational structure is being evaluated by an advisory committee which includes campus - wide representation. It will make a recommendation to me by early summer as to whether this re-organization should be made permanent.

We've done all of these things, and more. And we have had considerable success, but it has not been without its costs. Faced with the reality of limited resources, I called for the reallocation of administrative resources in order to continue our retention initiatives and support our model for student success. We've reallocated over one million dollars from administrative divisions to support instruction and retention activities. Through this reallocation, we were able to purchase instructional equipment, hire more full-time temporary faculty and enhance activities such as assessment and Writing Across the Curriculum. In addition, we've maximized instructional resources by having qualified administrators teach courses or engage in other instructional activities. This year, several administrators, including vice presidents, deans, and directors have volunteered to teach this summer so that we can have more courses for students.

Our planning efforts continue to take into account these priorities as well as the fiscal realities. CSU's Strategic Planning Committee, which includes university-wide representation, will make recommendations about how to reinforce our values and will advise us about actions that would be in conflict with our model.

The months to come will see a more focused and more determined Chicago State University. We will be looking at our administrative structure in terms of how we can best serve students, utilizing information from our Office of Institutional Research to continue to learn more about our students and their needs. We will take this opportunity to shape our services in ways that help students get into college, help them succeed in college and help them with opportunities after CSU. At the same time, we will seek out creative and cost effective ways to support our model and build upon the successes we've achieved thus far.

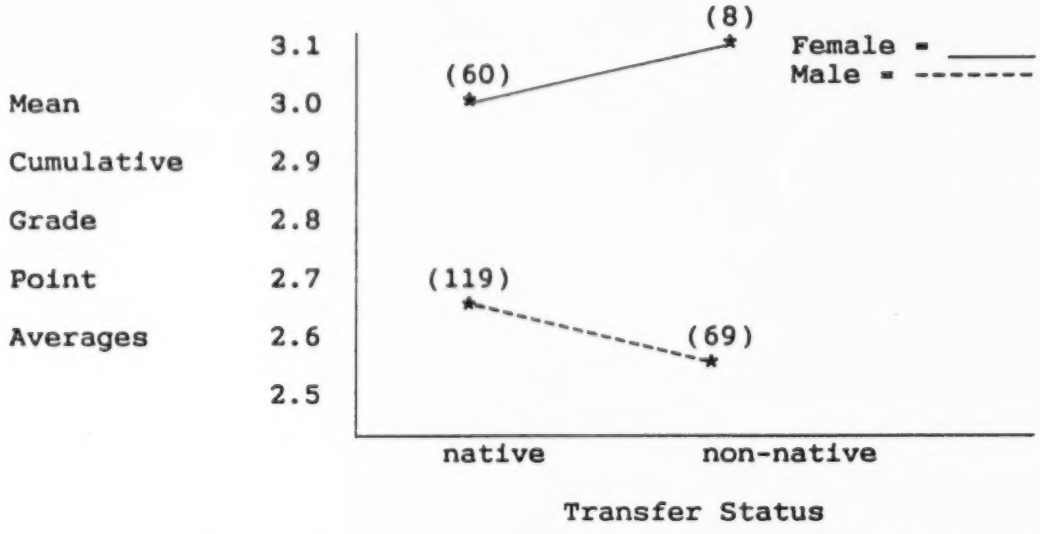
Because retention is, by definition, a long-term phenomenon, it is sometimes difficult in the short-term to determine what is working. Often, we would like to have the time to take a retrospective look before making more changes. But we do not have that luxury. Society, the work force and the world community are changing so rapidly, that we simply cannot afford to let a generation slip by while we are trying to figure out what we need to do. We need to be innovative, to try, to test and to implement those changes that have the most promise for success. At the same time, we must make sure that our values and our model are never compromised in the process.

Two of the 7 p values were statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypotheses for these comparisons were rejected: The statistically significant comparisons were: (1) the main effect gender (recurring see Table 1) and (2) the interaction between gender and transfer status.

The interaction between gender and transfer status was depicted in a profile plot. Figure 1 contains mean cumulative grade point averages and curves for gender.

Figure 1

The interaction between gender and transfer status for the dependent variable cumulative grade point average.



The interaction between gender and transfer status was ordinal. The results cited in Figure 1 indicated the following: 1. native females had numerically a greater mean grade point average than native males, 2. non-native

females had numerically higher mean grade point average than non-native males, 3. native males had a numerically higher mean grade point average than non-native males, and 4. non-native females had a numerically higher mean cumulative grade point average than native females.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 4 that the differences among the mean cumulative grade point averages of athletes according to gender, transfer status, and type of sport participation would not be statistically significant.

Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 4 was presented in Table. 4. The following were cited in Table 4: variables, sample sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* values.

Table 4

A Comparison of Mean Cumulative Grade Point Averages According to Gender, Transfer Status, and Type of Sport Participation Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance.

Variable	N	M*	S	F values	p values
Gender (A)					
Female	68	3.0[a]	0.58	9.27	.0026
Male	188	2.6[b]	0.56		
Type of Sport Participation (C)					
Non-revenue	166	2.6	0.59	2.35	.1265
Revenue	90	2.8	0.58		
Transfer Status (D)					
Native	179	2.8	0.62	0.11	.7396
Non-native	77	2.6	0.53		
Interactions					
A x C				**	**
A X D				1.29	.2574
C x D				0.07	.7915
A x C x D				**	**

* Based upon 4.00 = A
**Insufficient Data for Analysis
[ab] Difference Statistically Significant at the .05 level according to Bonferroni (Dunn) t-tests for means

One of the 7 p values was statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis for this comparison was rejected. The significant comparison was for the main effect gender (recurring, see Table 1). The results cited in Table 4 indicated no additional associations between independent and dependent variables.

Discussion

The purpose of the researcher was to investigate the cumulative grade point averages of student-athletes. The independent variables investigated were gender, academic classification, type of sport participation, and transfer status. The dependent variable was cumulative grade point average. A total of 4 composite null hypotheses were tested. Each composite null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level employing a three-way analysis of variance. The following design was used with each composite null hypothesis: composite null hypothesis number 1, a 2 x 4 x 2 factorial design, composite null hypothesis number 2, a 2 x 2 x 4 factorial design, composite null hypothesis number 3, a 2 x 4 x 2 factorial design, and composite null hypothesis number 4, a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design.

Eleven comparisons plus 13 recurring were made. Of 11 comparisons 4 were main effects and 7 were interactions. Of the 4 main effects 3 were statistically significant at the .05 level. The statistically significant main effects were the following: gender, type of sport participation, and

transfer status. The results from the significant main effects indicated the following: females had a significantly higher mean cumulative grade point average than males, students participating in non-revenue sports had significantly higher mean cumulative grade point average than those participating in revenue sports, and native students had significantly higher mean cumulative grade point averages than non-native students.

Of the 7 interactions 1 was statistically significant at the .05 level. The statistically significant interaction was between the independent variables gender and transfer status.

A study (cited in Lederman, 1984) by the National Collegiate Athletic Association found that 78 percent of the Division I female basketball players surveyed earned grade point averages of B or better compared to 55 percent of the male players. Also, of the 42 Division I schools surveyed, female basketball players achieved a 2.64 cumulative grade point average, and other female scholarship athletes averaged 2.67 in college. Their male counterparts earned a 2.44 cumulative grade point average in college. The results of the present study supported those findings. The cumulative grade point average for female student-athletes in the present study was found to be 3.0 and the cumulative grade point average for male student-athletes was found to be 2.6, a numerical difference of .40 which was

statistically significant at the .05 level.

Eitzen and Purdy (1986; cited in Eitzen, 1987) found in a study of the academic performance of college student-athletes at Tulane University for a four-year period that the mean cumulative grade point average for athletes participating in revenue-sports was 1.93 compared to non-revenue athletes whose mean cumulative grade point average was 2.55. The results of the present study supported those findings. The mean cumulative grade point average for non-revenue athletes was 2.8 and the mean cumulative grade point average for revenue athletes was 2.6, a numerical difference of .20 which was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Cox (1987) found the mean cumulative grade point average for native students significantly higher than for transfer students. The results of study showed that 20% of transfer students had grade point averages below 2.00, compared to 12.5% for the native students who had grade point averages below 2.00. Thirty-eight percent of the native students had grade point averages of over 3.00 compared to 22% for transfer students. The results of the present study supported those findings. The mean cumulative grade point average for native students was found to be 2.8 and the cumulative grade point average for non-native students was 2.6, a numerical difference of .20 which was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Strecker (1964) in a study at Fort Hays State

University speculated that the higher academic classification of members of the basketball squad could have contributed to the significant difference in the mean cumulative grade point average that existed between the football and basketball squads. However, the results of the present study did not support Strecker's claim. There were no statistically significant differences pertaining to academic classification.

The finding in the present study found that a significant interaction existed between gender and transfer status. This indicated that native females had a numerically greater mean grade point average than native males and non-native females had a numerically higher mean grade point average than non-native males. Eitzen (1987) found similar patterns. It was discovered at Tulane University that all male athletes had a mean grade point average of 2.23 which was significantly less than the mean grade point average of 2.61 for all female athletes. The present study also indicated that native males had a numerically higher grade point average than non-native males. Cox (1987) from a study of Fort Hays State University athletes reported that 38% of the native students had grade point averages of over 3.00 compared to 22% for transfer students. However, the results of the present study also contradicted both of these findings. The results from the interaction indicated non-native females had a

numerically higher cumulative grade point average than native females.

The results of the present study appeared to support the following generalizations:

1. female athletes had higher achievement than male athletes,
2. student-athletes participating in non-revenue sports had higher achievement than student-athletes participating in revenue sports,
3. native student-athletes had higher achievement than non-native student-athletes,
4. no association was found between the independent variable academic classification of student-athletes and the dependent variable cumulative grade point average,
5. no association between type of sport participation of student-athletes, and
6. gender and transfer status interacted.

The results of the present study appeared to support the following recommendations:

1. the study should be replicated employing a large random sample,
2. the study should be replicated comparing a random sample of student-athletes and control group, and
3. the study should be replicated at universities of different sizes.

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